My involvement with the CCSA began in 1997, when I joined as a member. In mid-1998, I noted that there was a Board vacancy for South Australia and decided to apply for the position. I had no idea what was involved in being a Board member at that time.

To begin with, my input purely involved attending six-weekly teleconferences. But, after a while, I asked myself what I could do for our CCSA South Australian members and decided that running education sessions for our rural and remote coders would be a good place to start. So, the CCSA Masterclass was born!

For the past couple of years, I have travelled to places such as Whyalla, Port Lincoln, and the Clare and Barossa valleys to conduct education sessions for clinical coders who may not otherwise get an opportunity to code the types of cases that other coders in major teaching hospitals see regularly. I get to meet coders from all areas of South Australia and they broaden their skills with some tricky coding — it is a win-win situation for all involved.

The Masterclass program in South Australia would not be as successful as it has been without the support of employers. My employer, the Royal Adelaide Hospital, has agreed to allow me training leave on the days that I conduct the classes. The program is seen as an important educational avenue for rural and remote clinical coders, and the involvement of its Coding Manager (me!) is also seen as a plus for the profile of the hospital.

The Regional Health Areas also support the program by paying the travel costs of the CCSA Masterclass Facilitator and some also pay for participant attendance fees.

The Masterclasses were originally intended to promote CCSA membership as well. For this reason, attendance in South Australia for current CCSA members is free. Others pay a fee for attendance, which covers costs associated with producing materials for the class.

The local Regional Health Area provides a guest speaker for each class who is usually a medical officer specialising in the topic of the day. The guest speaker is provided with a question sheet prior to the day. This question sheet is collated from entries made on the participants’ attendance forms. On the day of the class, the guest speaker answers the preset questions and also provides information on topics that arise during the coding portion of the class.

Classes run along the following lines:

1. Medical record abstracts and discharge summary samples are provided to participants prior to the day of the class
2. Coding outcomes and issues are then presented and discussed during the class, with slides and handouts
3. The guest speaker usually makes a presentation after lunch
4. The remainder of the day is usually taken over by the Regional Health Information Manager to conduct a regular coding staff meeting.

Topics covered so far have included:
- obstetrics
- diabetes
- gastrointestinal disease
- cardiovascular disease
- orthopaedics
- trauma and injury
- mental health
- oncology, and
- plastic surgery.

The Masterclasses have recently been extended in South Australia, and this expansion has been possible due to the involvement of other CCSA members who have volunteered their time to facilitate classes on behalf of the CCSA.

I would like to particularly thank CCSA members Nicky Moshos (Coding Manager, Women’s and Children’s Hospital) and Andrew Lubke (Regional Health Information Manager, Barossa Area Health Services) for assisting in this further development of the Masterclass Program. Their involvement is very much appreciated both by CCSA and the participants of the classes.

Currently, the CCSA Masterclass Program is being run in South Australia and Western Australia. This year, we hope to extend the Masterclasses into New South Wales, with the support of the CCSA Board member for that state, Filippa Pretty.

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